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to be among the first of the gifts which follow or precede the marriage offer. It has, we believe, had a marked success in this way, as a sort of lovers' Murray or Appleton; and if it can throw over the average bridal couple some reflection of its own refinement and taste, it will prove itself a valuable assistant to American civilization.

9. — *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada.* By CLARENCE KING.
Boston: James R. Osgood & Co. 1872.

MR. KING is a kind of young hero of the American type. We do not mean to base this opinion of him upon this book, which, though agreeable reading enough, is but a trifle, and shows only the superficial qualities of a lively *raconteur*. To be appreciated it should be read in company with the five huge volumes now appearing, in which Mr. King, the dignified chief of the great national survey of the fortieth parallel, publishes the results of his long and indefatigable labors. As a matter of dignity, this book of sketches will rather injure than benefit Mr. King, who, like all persons in employ of government, must run the gauntlet of congressional criticism; and it would be interesting to know in point of fact whether the publication of these sketches in any way affected the opinions recently expressed in Congress of Mr. King's Report, — opinions in which even General Garfield, who should know better, allowed himself to angle for a little cheap popularity by denouncing what, next to the Coast Survey, is probably the most valuable and the best conducted undertaking our government has now in hand.

Of Mr. King, the man of science, we shall have occasion to speak at greater length when his Report is complete. The undertaking with which he is identified is unique in geological science. Its results must greatly affect geological theories, and may not improbably settle forever more than one difficult geological problem. But these results are not as yet published, and Mr. King's own deductions from the facts he has observed make no part of his mountaineering sketches. These are of the nature of monthly magazines, slight. They are written to amuse, or, if any instruction is intended, it is carefully concealed; and in fact they are amusing, although it must be agreed that mountain-climbers are apt to be monotonous on paper, and that, to enjoy their adventures, the reader should always have a series of exact stereoscopic views representing the adventurer in the act of performing all his most break-neck feats. Every impartial reader must wish to judge for himself in regard to the amount of danger at any special moment, and the photograph alone is to be trusted for the facts.

Artistically speaking, Mr. King's book errs perhaps in carrying sensationalism too far for effect. The truth is, that in work like that of Mr. King, the wonder always is that a day passes without accident. If he is not dragging or riding a mule up or down a perpendicular precipice, he is shooting at bears, getting struck by lightning, or catching rattlesnakes by the tail. There is no end to the forms in which life or health is risked in these adventures; yet however great the momentary dangers may be in these mountain ascents, they are not so wearing nor so fatal as the risks of the alkali plains or the river sinks, where health is surely undermined. The danger, therefore, loses its artistic effect by repetition. Even the actor becomes careless and breaks his neck at length from mere inattention, while the reader becomes distinctly sleepy. Perhaps it is for this reason, perhaps also because words convey at best so blurred and unsatisfactory a picture of natural scenery, that we have found more pleasure in Mr. King's studies of character than in his climbings. Perhaps, too, it is because Mr. King is a humorist, and has an evident relish for the type of humor in which the extreme West excels. The little sketch of "The Newtys of Pike," for example, is quite admirably done. Or for a very characteristic bit of description, we may stop a moment on the following, an extract from "Cut-off Copples's":—

"With a look of despair the driver got off and laid the lash freely among his team; they jumped and jerked, frantically tangled themselves up, and at last all sulked and became stubbornly immovable. Meanwhile, a mile of teams behind, unable to pass on the narrow grade, came to an unwilling halt.

"About five wagons back I noticed a tall Pike, dressed in checked shirt, and pantaloons tucked into jack-boots. A soft felt hat, worn on the back of his head, displayed long locks of flaxen hair, which hung freely about a florid pink countenance, noticeable for its pair of violent little blue eyes, and facial angle rendered acute by a sharp, long nose.

"This fellow watched the stoppage with impatience, and at last, when it was more than he could bear, walked up by the other teams with a look of wrath absolutely devilish. One would have expected him to blow up with rage; yet withal his gait and manner were cool and soft in the extreme. In a bland, almost tender voice, he said to the unfortunate driver, 'My friend, perhaps I can help you'; and his gentle way of disentangling and patting the leaders as he headed them round in the right direction, would have given him a high office under Mr. Bergh. He leisurely examined the embedded wheel, and cast an eye along the road ahead. He then began in rather excited manner to swear, pouring it out louder and more profane, till he utterly eclipsed the most horrid blasphemies I ever heard, piling them up thicker and more fiendish till it seemed as if the very earth must open and engulf him.

"I noticed one mule after another give a little squat, bringing their breasts hard against the collars, and straining traces, till only one old mule with ears back and dangling chain still held out. The Pike walked up and yelled one gigantic oath; her ears sprang forward, she squatted in terror, and the iron links grated under her strain. He then stepped back and took the rein, every trembling mule looking out of the corner of its eye and listening at *qui vive*.

"With a peculiar air of deliberation and of childlike simplicity, he said in every-day tones, 'Come up there, mules!'

"One quick strain, a slight rumble, and the wagon rolled on to Copple's. . . .

"We betook ourselves to the office, which was of course bar-room as well. As I entered, the unfortunate teamster was about paying his liquid compliment to the florid Pike. Their glasses were filled. 'My respects,' said the little driver. The whiskey became lost to view, and went eroding its way through the dust these poor fellows had swallowed. He added, 'Well, Billy, you *can* swear.'

"'Swear?' repeated the Pike in a tone of incredulous questioning. 'Me swear?' as if the compliment were greater than his modest desert. 'No, I can't blaspheme worth a cuss. You'd jest orter hear Pete Green. *He can exhort the impenitent mule.*'"

It is pleasant to the Eastern man who lives in cities, who has no respectable mountains near him, and who cordially detests climbing them even when he is at their foot, to learn that the mountain-top is after all not an attractive spot even to the professional mountaineer. Persons who have, against their better judgment, been led to make one of these ascents must rejoice to hear their sensations expressed, by an authority like Mr. King, so well as they are in the following passage:—

"I always feel a strange renewal of life when I come down from one of these climbs; they are with me points of departure more marked and powerful than I can account for upon any reasonable ground. In spite of any scientific labor or presence of fatigue, the lifeless region, with its savage elements of sky, ice, and rock, grasps one's nature, and, whether one will or no, compels it into a stern, strong accord. Then, as you come again into softer air, and enter the comforting presence of trees, and feel the grass under your feet, one fetter after another seems to unbind from your soul, leaving it free, joyous, grateful!"

Mr. King has added to his mountaineering sketches a short concluding chapter on the people of California. His opinions on this subject will perhaps not be altogether gratifying to the Californians, although it is friendly enough. On one point, however, we are glad to find Mr. King express himself in terms very different from those which have been commonly used, even by Massachusetts travellers and writers

who should have known better. Of all the mischievous precedents that have ever been set in America, that of the vigilance committees was the most dangerous. Its success has done more to shake faith in the supreme necessity of law and legal measures for the redress of society than any other single experience in American history. It is gratifying to meet with a man who is bold enough to express this opinion, and in whose mouth the opinion has unusual weight:—

“The vigilants quickly put out of existence a majority of the worst desperadoes, and by their swift, merciless action struck such terror to the rest that ever after the right has mainly controlled affairs. This was *perhaps* well. With characteristic promptness they laid down their power and gave California over to the constituted authorities. This was magnificent. They deserve the commendation due success. They have, however, such a frank, honest way of singing their praise, such eternal, undisguised, and virtuous self-laudation over the whole matter, that no one else need interrupt them with fainter notes.

“Although this generation has written its indorsement in full upon the transaction, it may be doubted if History will trace an altogether favorable verdict upon her pages. Possibly to fulfil the golden round of duty, it is needful to do right in the right way, and success may not be proven the eternal test of merit.

“That the vigilance committees grasped the moral power is undeniable; that they used it for the public salvation is equally true; but the best advocates are far from showing that with skill and moderation they might not have thrown their weight into the scale *with* law, and conquered, by means of legislature, judge, and jury, a peace wholly free from the stain of lawless blood. . . . Whether better or best the act has not left unmixed blessing.”

Mr. King writes with characteristic spirit and energy, and his book will, we hope, create a wide and popular interest in the success of the great work on which he has been so long engaged.

10. — *Recollections of Past Life.* By SIR HENRY HOLLAND, Bart. Second Edition. London: Longmans, Green, & Co. 1872. [New York: Appletons.]

SIR HENRY HOLLAND'S little book has, it appears, had a success in London. The second edition lies before us, and there is every reason to suppose that it will be, if it has not already been, followed by a third. Perhaps this success is, however, primarily as much due to the unusually large circle of acquaintance which the author enjoys as to the merits of the book itself. At least we are prepared to say that the personality of the author is the most noticeable part of his work, and